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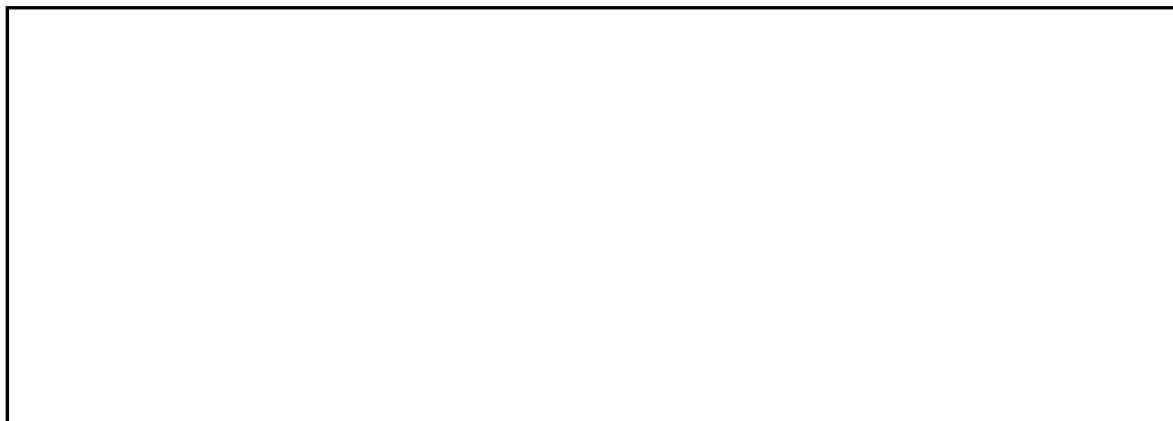
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Portuguese Socialist Party Shifting to Left

Portuguese Foreign Minister Mario Soares will face some hard decisions when he returns home this week from a visit to a number of communist and neutral states. The decisions concern the problems of the Socialist Party, which he heads and which is shifting sharply to the left.

Soares' first decision will be whether to resign his cabinet post to devote his full energies to party matters. The party's congress last month served to sharpen its divisions and reveal its general disorganization.

Soares reportedly promised his supporters after the congress that he would resign from the government this month. He has not, however, been showing much enthusiasm or ability for party work, having become fond of the prestige and influence that go with being foreign minister.

The congress failed to make decisions on many key points in the party's program. The short-term social and economic measures that were adopted by the congress are more radical than those advocated by any other major Portuguese party, including the Communist Party.

The US embassy in Lisbon reports that attempts to get the congress to accept a more moderate program were rejected overwhelmingly.

The delegates devoted most of their time to electing a slate of party leaders. Two slates were offered for the party's 151-member national commission. Although the slate led by Soares won, the commission has a more leftist cast than the party membership as a whole. This cast is likely to be strengthened when the 20 seats allotted to youth are filled at the Socialist Youth Congress later this month.

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A temporary secretariat has been named, and by the time a permanent one is to be selected, the Socialist youth representatives will be on the national commission, which selects the leadership. Soares, however, probably will survive as secretary general.

The congress has given the commission authority to complete those portions of the party's program that were not addressed at the congress. A draft of the program calls for gradual Portuguese withdrawal from all political and military blocs. Some would like to write in provisions for establishing a common election front with the Communist Party.

Soares has taken a stand against both, but he will be under intense pressure to radicalize the party's program.

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